

ESTHER

INTRODUCTION

It is uncertain who wrote this book, but Mordecai could have been the writer (see [Esth. 9:29](#)).

"For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" ([Esth. 4:14](#)).

The Book of Esther in one sense is the most remarkable in the Bible, and that is because the name of God is not mentioned in this book at all. There is not even a divine title or pronoun that refers to God. Yet the heathen king is mentioned 192 times. Prayer is not mentioned -- it wouldn't be, since God is omitted. The Book of Esther is never quoted in the New Testament. There's not even a casual reference to it. But the superstition of the heathen is mentioned, and lucky days, and we'll be introduced into a pagan, heathen court of a great world monarch who ruled over the then-known world. This is indeed an unusual book.

It is an unusual book for another reason: it is named for a woman. Actually, there are only two books in the Bible named for women. (Some want to include the Epistles of John. I disagree with that, so don't submit that one to me.) Ruth and Esther are the two books named for women. I've written on both of these books: Ruth, the Romance of Redemption and Esther, the Romance of Providence. Redemption is a romance; it is a love story. We love Him because He first loved us, and He gave Himself for us because He loves us. The Book of Esther is the romance of providence. God directs this material universe in which we live today by His providence. In fact, it's the way He directs all of His creation.

Back in Deuteronomy, before God brought the Israelites into the Promised Land, He outlined their history for them. He told them about the Babylonian captivity, and He also told them that Rome would destroy the city of Jerusalem and the people would be taken into captivity. It actually happened that way. But in [Deuteronomy 31:18](#) God says this: "And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods."

In the Book of Esther God has hidden His face from them. But we can say, "God standeth in the shadows keeping watch over His own." So the Book of Esther gives us a record of a group of people out of the will of God.

Now, when Cyrus made the decree -- after the seventy years of Babylonian captivity -- that the people might return to the land, not all of them returned. Less than sixty thousand returned, and we had the record of that in Ezra, Nehemiah, and in the two prophetic books of Haggai and Zechariah. But what about the largest segment that did not return to the land? (We have a similar condition today. We speak of the nation Israel. Well, there are probably two million who have returned there, but there are about sixteen million

who are scattered throughout the world today. So that, actually, the majority are not in the land at all. That is evident, and I use it merely as a parallel to illustrate what it was in that day.) Several million of these people did not return to the land after the decree of Cyrus. They should have. God had commanded them to. Now they're out of the will of God. The question is, do we have any record of these people, this large number, that did not return to the land? Yes, and that record is in the Book of Esther. It is recorded here. In other words, we just have one page out of their history, one small item of their experience, and one scrap and shred of evidence in their voluminous record. And the little Book of Esther becomes all important for that reason.

In this we see God in a new way. Although they are not in His will, we see God directing them. How? By His providence.

What is providence? Well, all the great doctrines that we have today are taught in certain books of the Old Testament. You have redemption taught in the Book of Exodus, and the love side of redemption taught in the Book of Ruth. And the Book of Job teaches repentance. And resurrection is taught in the Book of Jonah. So the great doctrines of our Christian faith are taught in certain books of the Old Testament. Now, the Book of Esther illustrates providence. These people in a foreign land, out of the will of God, have not obeyed His orders because His orders were to return to the land of Israel. They remained. They disobeyed. They forgot God; they were far from Him. They did not call upon Him in time of trouble. When they first came into the land of their captivity, they could say, "How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?" They couldn't sing; they sat down and wept when they remembered Zion. But now they've forgotten Zion. In fact, it's in rubble and ruins, and they don't want to go back there. They have made a covenant at the beginning, ". . . let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem . . ." ([Ps. 137:6](#)). They're forgotten, and their tongue is silent in this book. They're not praising God at all, nor are they praying to Him. That makes this, you see, a very remarkable book. But what about God? Well, He hasn't forgotten them. How can God direct them if they've rejected Him? Well, God does it by His providence. And the Book of Esther teaches the providence of God. Now, what is providence? Will you forgive me if I'm theological for just a moment? If you want a definition, here's a theological definition: Providence is the means by which God directs all things -- both animate and inanimate; seen and unseen; good and evil -- toward a worthy purpose, which means His will must finally prevail. Or as the psalmist said, ". . . his kingdom ruleth over all" ([Ps. 103:19](#)). In [Ephesians 1:11](#) Paul tells us that God ". . . worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Our God is running the universe today, friends, even though there are some who think that it has slipped out from under Him. Emerson was wrong when he said, "Things are in the saddle and ride mankind." Things are riding mankind all right, but they are not in the saddle. God is in the saddle.

There are three words we need to keep in mind before we can properly understand the providence of God in relationship to the material universe and to man in particular.

The first word is creation. We understand by "creation" that God, by His fiat word, spoke this universe into existence. Do you have a better explanation? If you do, I would like to hear it. Frankly, I become a little annoyed with some of the college teachers today who are not experts in the field of science but speak as though they were experts about how

evolution formed man. Will you please tell me where all of the "goo" came from out of which the earth and man evolved? When did the earth begin? Did it begin out of nothing? Don't tell me that it has always existed, because if you do, then you have an infinite universe. If you have an infinite universe, then you have to have somebody who is infinite to run things. We are on the horns of a dilemma. There are only two explanations for the universe: One is speculation -- evolution comes under that heading, and prior to evolution there were other theories -- all of them have been or will be exploded. They are speculation.

The second explanation is revelation. The only way that you and I, certainly as Christians, will ever understand how this universe began is by faith. We understand that God brought this universe into existence, and the only way that you and I know this is by revelation. "... Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God" ([Rom. 10:17](#)). Either you believe in creation or you believe in speculation. There's no third explanation for the universe. That's creation.

Then the second word is preservation. And that's a tremendous word. It is by God's preservation that the universe is held together. [Hebrews 1:3](#) tells us that Christ "upholds all things by the word of his power." [Colossians 1:17](#) says, "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist." What is the "stickum" that holds this universe together? What is it that makes it run just like clockwork today so that a man can be sent to the moon and it is possible to plot exactly where the moon will be? Scientists can send a little gadget out toward Mars and they know exactly where Mars will be. You think it is remarkable that man can do things like that, but I think it is remarkable that we have a universe that runs like clockwork today. Who runs it? The Lord Jesus Christ runs the universe. He upholds all things by the word of His power.

The third word is providence. This is the word we will consider in the Book of Esther. Providence is the way that God is directing the universe. He is moving it into tomorrow -- He is moving it into the future by His providence. Providence means "to provide." God will provide. Remember what Abraham said on top of Mount Moriah, when he and his son Isaac had gone to this mountain to sacrifice to God. They had everything they needed except a sacrifice. "And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together" ([Gen. 22:7-8](#)). Nineteen hundred years later, God provided a Lamb on that same mountain ridge that goes through Jerusalem. On Golgotha the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified. He was the Lamb that God provided. He was "... the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" ([John 1:29](#)). God provides.

Providence means that the hand of God is in the glove of human events. When God is not at the steering wheel, He is the backseat driver. He is the coach who calls the signals from the bench. Providence is the unseen rudder on the ship of state. God is the pilot at the wheel during the night watch. As someone has said, "He makes great doors swing on little hinges." God brought together a little baby's cry and a woman's heart down by the River Nile when Pharaoh's daughter went to bathe. The Lord pinched little Moses and he

let out a yell. The cry reached the heart of the princess, and God used it to change the destiny of a people. That was providence. That was the hand of God.

The Book of Esther provides us with the greatest illustrations of the providence of God. Although His name is never mentioned, we see His providence in each page of this wonderful little book.

Outline

I. The Wife Who Refused to Obey Her Husband, [Esth. 1](#)

II. The Beauty Contest to Choose a Real Queen, [Esth. 2](#)

III. Haman and Anti-Semitism, [Esth. 3](#)

IV. For Such a Time as This, [Esth. 4](#)

V. The Scepter of Grace and the Nobility of Esther, [Esth. 5](#)

VI. When a King Could Not Sleep at Night, [Esth. 6](#)

VII. The Man Who Came to Dinner but Died on the Gallows, [Esth. 7](#)

VIII. The Message of Hope That Went out from the King, [Esth. 8](#)

IX. The Institution of the Feast of Purim, [Esth. 9](#) through [Esth. 10](#)

Chapter 1

THEME: The wife who refused to obey her husband

This chapter out of the history of a pagan nation is inserted in the Word of God for a very definite purpose: to teach the providence of God. We shall see this as we turn the pages of this story. It begins with the law of a heathen kingdom and a difficulty -- a matrimonial difficulty. It was a very personal affair that arose in the kingdom, but it had international repercussions.

Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:) [[Esth. 1:1](#)].

First we should understand that Ahasuerus is not the name of the man, but the title. It means "high father" or "venerable king." As the word Caesar is a title and does not identify the man, so Ahasuerus does not identify this Persian king in secular history. There is quite a divergence of opinion concerning his identity.

The viewpoint that I hold is that Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther is Xerxes the Great of Persia, because he is the one who actually brought the kingdom to its zenith. Xerxes is the man who made the last great effort to the East to overcome the West, and it was a tremendous effort. A volume published by the British Museum in 1907 entitled The Sculptures and Inscriptions of Darius the Great on the Rock of Behistun in Persia establishes with the "Cyrus Cylinders" translation that Ahasuerus and Esther were the parents of the Cyrus of [Isaiah 44:28](#); [Isaiah 45:1](#).

Xerxes reigned over a kingdom, a great empire, from India to Ethiopia. It extended through the Fertile Crescent which was the very heartland of the world.

That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace,

In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him [[Esth. 1:2-3](#)].

This banquet would pale into insignificance anything that man might attempt in our day. There were 127 provinces in his kingdom, and out of each of these he brought a delegation (how many, I don't know), so that he had present probably one or two thousand people for this banquet. This is what we would call a very swanky affair. It cost millions of dollars. It was a banquet to end all banquets. It was a great event in the history of the world. How can God get in on a scene like this? Well, He will by His providence. "God stands in the shadows, keeping watch over His own."

When he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, even an hundred and fourscore days [[Esth. 1:4](#)].

For 181 days Ahasuerus boarded these fellows. He had a perpetual smorgasbord for six months! The father of Louis XV of France was talking with the preceptor and the exchequer of the kingdom about this banquet, and he said that he did not see how the king had the patience to have that kind of a banquet. The exchequer, who was handling the finances for Louis XV, said that he did not see how he financed it.

This banquet revealed the wealth, the luxury, and the regal character of this oriental court. As I have indicated the reason for it seems obvious. He had called in all of his princes and all of his rulers from every corner of his kingdom that he might win their wholehearted support of the military campaign to capture Greece and to make himself the supreme ruler of the world of that day. And, of course, he almost succeeded in that attempt. I am confident he would have succeeded had not God already predicted that the operation would eventuate in failure, that the power would move from the East to the West.

Xerxes wanted his princes and rulers to know that he was able to pay for the war he was contemplating. He displayed the wealth of his kingdom by giving this great pagan feast. The banquet was pagan from beginning to end. It was a godless thing. There are those who try to find spiritual lessons here. Very candidly, I see none whatsoever. What I do see is God's introducing us to a pagan court where decisions are made that affect the world. It looks as if God is left out, but God wants you to know that He is overruling these circumstances, and He is going to accomplish His own purpose.

And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace [[Esth. 1:5](#)].

Xerxes brought the banquet to a climax in the last seven days. Apparently he brought in a tremendous population of people for the final seven days in the court of the garden.

Where were white, green, and blue, hangings, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble: the beds were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black, marble [[Esth. 1:6](#)].

The silver, the gold, the jewels, and the beautiful hangings tell us of the wealth of this kingdom. It is a gaudy display. The ruins of those palaces still testify to the richness of Persia. A few years ago this same kingdom of Persia celebrated its twenty-five hundredth anniversary in the same place. Television coverage and current magazines showed something of the tremendous wealth. The banquet cost millions of dollars. There was a great deal of criticism of it because of the poverty in that land. But the banquet Xerxes put on was costly beyond imagination. Judging from secular history, the purpose of Xerxes in giving this banquet was to win support for his forthcoming military campaign. He wanted everyone to know he could afford a war. He used a feast to convince his princes and rulers.

We have seen this method used on a comparably small scale in our day. Several years ago, when one of the great automobile concerns came out with a new model, they brought all of their dealers from over the world to Detroit for a convention. It was made up of drinking parties and banquets and was held with the idea of selling the dealers on the new model that was to come out. So it was with Xerxes, only he was bidding for their support in a new campaign. Human nature does not change. In the Medo-Persian Empire, Xerxes was getting ready to go to war, but first he put forth a great selling effort.

And they gave them drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king [[Esth. 1:7](#)].

This banquet, pagan from beginning to end, ended in a drunken orgy.

And the drinking was according to the law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure [[Esth. 1:8](#)].

This verse tells us that "the drinking was according to the law; none did compel." Even these pagan oriental rulers, who had absolute sovereignty, never forced anyone to drink, although they themselves were given to it, as was this man Xerxes, as we shall see. But today we are more civilized and a man either has to drink or get out. Some businessmen tell me that it is almost impossible today to go to some business meetings and not participate in a cocktail party. One executive in a company told me that the president of the concern called him to his office and rebuked him because he had not participated in drinking at a company cocktail party. You would think that this president would want sober men for his executives. But, you see, we are civilized, and we compel people to drink.

Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to king Ahasuerus [[Esth. 1:9](#)].

Vashti made a feast for the women's auxiliary. The men brought their wives, but they did not go to the same banquet in that day. It was a breach of social custom for men and women to attend the same feast. It was different from our present-day banquets. The women were kept in separate quarters. The banquet for the men was serious business, and apparently they did not mix sex and business. Xerxes was selling a war; so Vashti entertained the women at another banquet.

On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king [[Esth. 1:10](#)].

This verse tells us that the king got drunk. He overstepped himself. You did not have to drink at these banquets, but if you wanted to, you could have all you wanted. It seems that the king was not a teetotaler. The king was "high" on the seventh day. Here the question arises concerning not only this king but any king or ruler: Is he a fit ruler if he is engaged in drunkenness? We are told that the oriental people today are asking if America with all of her drunkenness is in a position to be the leader of the nations of the world. This is a question that America must answer within the next few years. If it continues as it is today, drunkenness will ultimately destroy our land.

We find Xerxes under the influence of alcohol, doing something that he would never have done if he had been sober. He commanded his chamberlains who served in his presence to bring Vashti to the banquet.

To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on [[Esth. 1:11](#)].

The king had displayed his wealth and his luxury, and he had demonstrated to them his ability to carry on the campaign he had in mind. Now, under the influence of alcohol, he does something that is contrary to the proprieties of that day. He will display Vashti, who is a beautiful woman to look at. He decides that he will bring her into the banquet court before that convention of men. He would never have done this had he not been drunk. It was a very ungentlemanly thing to do. In fact, it was positively crude. He wanted everyone to see Vashti, his treasure, his crowning jewel, as it were.

But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him [[Esth. 1:12](#)].

The king said to his guests, "I have a real surprise for you. I want you to see my queen. She is going to stand before you with the crown royal upon her head. She is very beautiful." In a few minutes one of the chamberlains whispered in the king's ear, "She won't come." Don't tell me that women did not have rights in that day! Vashti turned down the king's request. Imagine having to get up and say, "I'm very sorry, gentlemen, but we will have to change the program of the evening. Our main attraction did not arrive. The queen will not be here this evening." That started the buzzing throughout the banquet. The guests began to say, "What kind of a king is he that he cannot even command the queen?"

Although I feel that Vashti was perfectly justified in refusing to come at the king's commandment, I think she should have thought the thing over. She should have considered the fact that her refusal might cause a scandal that would hurt her husband in his position. Under the circumstances she should have gone to the banquet. She should have obeyed the king.

Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so was the king's manner toward all that knew law and judgment:

And the next unto him was Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king's face, and which sat the first in the kingdom;)

What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains? [[Esth. 1:13-15](#)].

This situation called for a crisis meeting of the cabinet. The men named in this passage were the princes who met with him privately and personally, just as the cabinet meets with the President of the United States. Now this whole thing might sound silly to us today, but in that day it was no incidental matter. The queen had refused to obey a commandment of the king. The cabinet had to take care of this crisis. Here they are preparing for a great campaign, and the queen will not do what the king asks her to do. What should be done with her? It seems that there was no law which they could exercise.

And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that are in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus [[Esth. 1:16](#)].

We've heard much about the fact that back in those days women were chattel. In many cases that was true, but apparently Vashti had a lot of freedom, and there was no law which could force her to obey the king's command to come to the banquet. The cabinet was going to have to come up with a severe and harsh law to take care of the situation. About this time a little fellow named Memucan speaks up. He's the spokesman, and a henpecked husband. How do I know he is henpecked? He is afraid that, when the deed of the queen comes to the attention of all women, they will look with contempt upon their husbands. Memucan is Mr. Milquetoast. If the queen gets away with this, he would not want to go home. I don't think he had much to say in his own home. I think his wife made most of the decisions. This, perhaps, is one of the reasons he spoke out at this cabinet meeting.

There are many men who take orders from others in their employment -- they never get a chance to express themselves. Then they go home and their wives won't let them express themselves either. I have known such men who speak out when they serve on church boards. They talk and talk, but they make no contribution to the welfare and development of the church. They talk but have nothing to say. They make suggestions that have no merit. Memucan is this kind of a man.

For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not.

Likewise shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus shall there arise too much contempt and wrath [[Esth. 1:17-18](#)].

This man, Memucan, is one of the princes, you see. He says, "I will have a fight over this matter when I go home." In fact, I think he came to the conclusion that if something was not done, he would not go home.

Perhaps you have heard of the henpecked husband who came to the office one morning and boasted, "Last night my wife was down on her knees to me." One of the fellows, knowing the situation, was a little skeptical. He said, "What were the circumstances, and what exactly did she say to you?" He looked a little embarrassed and admitted, "Well, she was down on her knees, looking under the bed, and she said, 'Come out from under there, you coward!'" "

There is also the story about the man who told the people in his office that his wife said that he was a model husband. He told this to a hard-boiled secretary and she did not commend him. Instead she said, "Why don't you look up the word model in the dictionary, and you won't be so proud of it." He took her advice. A "model," he found out, was a small imitation of the real thing. That is what Memucan was. He was henpecked; he was Mr. Milquetoast. He said loud and clear, "Something must be done to protect our homes in this matter." And actually it was a real crisis because the king and queen set an example for the kingdom.

Notice Memucan's proposal.

If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she [[Esth. 1:19](#)].

I trust that you realize the setting for the Book of Esther is a pagan court. A pagan law is being enacted which has nothing to do with the Mosaic Law, neither is it Christian by any means. It is a new law, but it is the law of the Medes and the Persians.

And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small.

And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan:

For he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and

that it should be published according to the language of every people [[Esth. 1:20-22](#)].

The queen is set aside. No more is she to be the queen. It happened because she refused to obey the king. A decree went out. It declared that in the kingdom a wife was to honor her husband, and he was to rule. Apparently, this had not been true before in the empire of the Medes and Persians. Now it is law, and it cannot be altered or changed.

This law reveals the character of Xerxes as he stands in profane history. You will remember that he took his army, the largest that had ever been marshaled, as far as Thermopylae. Also he came with a fleet of three hundred ships which were destroyed at Salamis. This man, in a fit of madness, went down to the sea and beat the waves with a belt for destroying his fleet! Now a man who will do that evidently has something radically wrong with him. It seems that he was a man who suffered from some form of abnormality, as most of the world rulers have -- and still do. Julius Caesar, Napoleon, and Hitler were men of abnormal mental processes. Nebuchadnezzar, great man that he was, represented as the head of gold, suffered from a form of abnormality known as hysteria. We find him moving through these cycles in the Book of Daniel.

Any man today who even wants to be a world ruler ought to be examined by a psychiatrist! However, forms of abnormality have not kept men from achieving greatness in the history of the world. This is true of Xerxes. He was a man of tremendous ability yet in unreasoning anger he allowed this banishment of his lovely queen. It became the law of the Medes and Persians, an edict, which could not be altered. Although later the king himself wanted to break the law, he could not. The law of the Medes and the Persians could not be broken.

Chapter 2

THEME: The beauty contest to choose the real queen

After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her [[Esth. 2:1](#)].

This verse begins, "After these things." After what things? Well, the things that had taken place in the first chapter, and the campaign to Greece where Xerxes was soundly defeated. After his defeat he returned in deep dejection to his palace. Added to his misery was the absence of his queen and the fact that the law of the Medes and Persians could not be altered -- even by the king himself. Vashti could never again be his queen.

We must turn to secular history for the campaign of Xerxes against the Greeks, since the Bible gives us no record of this campaign. He led a great army against the Greeks. The secret of the strength of the Persians was in numbers, but the individual Persian soldier was not as well trained as the individual Greek soldier. The Greeks emphasized the individual, and as a result one Greek soldier could have taken care of ten Persians. So at the battle at Thermopylae, only a few men could get in the narrow pass. As a result the Greeks won a signal victory over the Persian army. It was an unfortunate defeat for Xerxes, but God was overruling. The power was about to pass from Persia to Greece.

After his defeat and in his loneliness he paces up and down in the palace every day. He is thinking of Vashti, but the law that he has made concerning the queen cannot be changed. He has set aside this beautiful woman, and he can never have her again. The servants know his state of mind, and they are watching him. They know that something must be done.

Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king:

And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hege the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given them [[Esth. 2:2-3](#)].

Members of the king's cabinet, occupying high positions, notice how moody and lonely the king is. They made a suggestion that there be conducted a beauty contest and that the entire kingdom be searched for women who were beautiful. They were to be brought in from near and far. I am sure that the number of women chosen was in the hundreds.

And let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so [[Esth. 2:4](#)].

The king was to be the judge, the sole judge, of this contest.

Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei the son of Kish, a Benjamite [[Esth. 2:5](#)].

The story in the Book of Esther to this point has just been the window dressing -- the stage props. We have had a glimpse into a heathen court. We have been introduced to the happenings there for a very definite purpose. It explains the beauty contest and how Esther came to the throne. Because she became queen, she was able to intervene and intercede in behalf of her people. An entire people would have been exterminated at that time had she not been in that position on the throne. We will begin to see the hand of God moving up in the palace.

Up to this point there has been nothing spiritual in the palace. It was as godless as anything could possibly be. Drunken orgies were often held, but God is going to overrule. We are going to see His providence. He is arranging the events so that at the proper time He will have someone to intervene in behalf of His people, the Jews.

Somebody is going to raise the question about this beauty contest and say, "It looks as if God approves of beauty contests." No, I don't think He does. But, my friend, when a child of God gets out of God's will, He permits many things to happen of which He does not approve. And He will overrule through these events. God's overruling power is one of the important lessons in this little Book of Esther. Many Christians today are living on the fringe of God's will. They are not really being directed by the will of God. They are not what we call in the will of God. Yet God directs them by His providence. Esther is an illustration of this.

Actually our story begins with "a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai." He was of the tribe of Benjamin. The question that immediately arises is: What is he doing here? He belonged to the royal family of Israel. He was from the family of Saul.

Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity
which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom
Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away [[Esth. 2:6](#)].

God had permitted His people to return to their own land, as He had prophesied through Isaiah. Cyrus had given a decree to permit them to return, and those who were in the will of God did return to Palestine. However, very few returned to their homeland. The greater number of them had made a place for themselves in the land of their captivity -- they had learned shopkeeping from the Gentiles -- and elected to remain. They liked it. When they were free to go, they did not want to return to their homeland. Many of them, out of the will of God, chose to remain, and Mordecai happened to be one of them. He should have been back in the land of Israel but -- of all places -- notice where he is: in the palace. He has a political job.

You may remember that Joseph also had a political job in Egypt; yet he was in the will of God directly. Daniel in the court of Babylon was also in the will of God. But Mordecai is not in the direct will of God. You will see that the Book of Esther is the book of the providence of God. As I have said, a popular definition of providence is this: Providence is how God coaches the man on second base. And this man Mordecai is going to be brought "home," although he is out of the will of God, and although he is not looking to God for help. Even at a time when you would think he and his people would turn to God, they do not. There is no mention of God or of prayer in this book at all because these people are out of the will of God.

Both Mordecai and Esther appear on the pages of Scripture in a poor light, although they are very high-type individuals, as we shall see later on in the story. Mordecai was taken captive, probably at a young age, in the second deportation of captives that left Jerusalem. That was during the reign of Jeconiah (better known as Jehoiachin). The first deportation that left Jerusalem was made up of the princes, the nobility, the upper class -- Daniel was with that group. The second captivity took out those, shall we say, of the upper middle class. This man Mordecai was in that group.

After the third deportation, when Jerusalem was finally destroyed, only the poorest class was left in the land. Mordecai had a young cousin whose parents may have been slain when Nebuchadnezzar took the city, for multitudes were slain.

And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter:
for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and
beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead,
took for his own daughter [[Esth. 2:7](#)].

Esther's Hebrew name was Hadassah, which means "star." She certainly was a star and a very beautiful woman, according to Scripture. Mordecai adopted her as his own daughter. Her one great asset was beauty. When the announcement was made that there was to be a choice of another queen for Ahasuerus, immediately Mordecai became interested. His position in the palace no doubt gave him the opportunity to see the different girls that

were brought from all over the kingdom to enter the contest. I am sure he compared them with Esther and decided that none of them were as beautiful as his adopted daughter.

So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shusan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women.

And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women [[Esth. 2:8-9](#)].

You can see the providence of God moving into this situation. Mordecai took his young cousin Esther and entered her in the beauty contest. I must say that at this particular juncture I do not have much respect for this man. Before the story is over, I am going to change my mind, and I will eat my words, but right now I despise him for what he is doing. To begin with, he is disobeying God. God had told His people not to intermarry with the heathen. He is definitely breaking the Mosaic Law by entering this girl in the beauty contest on the chance that she might become the next queen. The girls who did not win the contest would automatically enter the harem of the king. If Esther lost, she would be forced to become a concubine. She would be exposed to an awful life, but Mordecai is willing to take that risk.

We can see God taking command of the situation. Esther was brought to the king's house. She pleased Hegai, the keeper of the women. She obtained kindness from him, and he gave her everything she needed to help make her even more beautiful.

Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew it [[Esth. 2:10](#)].

Remember that the Jews were a captive people and anti-Semitism always had been a curse in the nations of the world. And it had been in this nation. You cannot read the account of Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem without realizing his hatred for these people. It was he who brought them to Babylon, but he is no longer on the scene, and a new nation has charge of them. Yet the anti-Semitic feeling remains. Mordecai, being very sensitive to that, warns Esther not to reveal her nationality. This silence is tantamount to a denial of her religion, because religion is the thing that has identified these people down through the years. The moment Mordecai and Esther denied their nationality, they also denied their religion. By remaining in the land of captivity they were out of the will of God. It is of interest to note that today, when men and women are out of the will of God, they have very little to say about their faith in Christ.

And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her [[Esth. 2:11](#)].

When you are in the will of God, you can rest in the fact that God is causing all things to work together for good. Mordecai is not resting in God, because he is out of God's will. He is pacing up and down, nervously biting his fingernails, wondering how things will turn out. He wonders if he has not made a terrible blunder and mistake by entering Esther in this beauty contest. He is absolutely frightened at what he has done. He is worried sick. He cannot sleep at night. This is Mordecai's condition. When you are out of God's will, you are not apt to rest on your laurels and say everything will be all right. At this point he has not, nor can he, put it into God's hands. I am not sure that he knew anything about the providence of God. However, God is overruling in this.

May I remind you of my definition of providence? Providence is the way God leads the man who will not be led. We see God beginning to move at this particular point. It is no accident that Esther is given the most prominent place and that she is shown every favor and given every consideration. There are no accidents with God.

Notice the type of beautification that went on.

Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with other things for the purifying of the women;) [[Esth. 2:12](#)].

May I say to you that if your wife takes a few hours in a beauty salon, you ought not to complain -- these girls spent a whole year there! The first six months they went to the spa for reducing and oil treatments. Then the next six months they went to the perfumers. I suppose they even swam in cologne in that day in order to be prepared to go into the presence of the king. You can see the tremendous emphasis that was placed on the physical, and this is typical of a pagan culture. The farther away America gets from God the more counters we have in our department stores for beauty aids. Have you noticed that? And with the multiplicity of beautifying treatments, it is rather disappointing that we don't have more beauty than we do. But these girls went through an entire year of beauty-conditioning for the contest.

Women have not changed much over the years. A great deal of makeup was used to make the women in this contest beautiful. A lot of makeup is used today. I hope no one is going to take issue with me about the use of makeup or about whether Esther should have entered this contest. Very candidly, I don't think she should have entered the contest, and we are going to find out that she did not need makeup. There are many extremists on the subject of makeup. A dear lady once came to me when I was pastor in downtown Los Angeles, California. She thought that some of the girls were using too much makeup. She did not think a Christian ought to use it, and she put me out on a limb when she asked me what I thought about the subject. I said, "Well, it depends on the woman. Some women would be greatly improved if they used a little makeup, and I think we should all do the best we can with what God has given us." She took that personally, and I want to add that she had reason to. I felt like saying to her, "A little makeup, lady, would improve you a great deal."

In Esther's case God permitted all of this by His providence. Her entrance into the contest and her acceptance by the man in charge of the contestants were all ordered by God. Hegai, keeper of the women, thought Esther looked like a winner, so he put her up front. It was a step forward in God's program. It was not an accident. God's providence was overruling in her life.

Then thus came every maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house.

In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name [[Esth. 2:13-14](#)].

After one year of preparation, the time came for each maiden to go to the king's chambers. For her visit she could have anything she wanted in the line of clothes or jewelry. Soon it would be Esther's turn to go to the king. She was taking an awful chance. If she did not win, she would become one of the concubines of the king of Persia, which certainly would have been a horrible thing for this Jewish maiden. This is the reason Mordecai is biting his fingernails. He knows they are out of the will of God, and he knows the terrific chance this girl, whom he raised, is taking. But God is going to overrule.

Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her [[Esth. 2:15](#)].

When it was Esther's turn to go to the king, it was decided that she was a natural beauty. It would have been like gilding a lily to send her to the beauty parlor. She was already beautiful and lovely. Everyone who saw her said, "There is the winner!" She stood out above everybody else. Is the hand of God moving? Yes! He is moving by His providence. He is going to put her on the throne next to the king, because, if she is not there, the whole nation of Israel is going to be destroyed. If that happens, God will be violating His Word, and God never does that.

So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti [[Esth. 2:16-17](#)].

When the king saw Esther, he did not have to look any further for a queen. The contest was over as far as he was concerned. He had found the one to take Vashti's place, and Esther was made queen.

How did she become the winner? Was it by accident or chance? I don't think so. Her selection was by the providence of Almighty God. We will see in the next chapter that it was essential for God to go before and make arrangements to protect His people. He did this by making Esther queen. For this reason we were introduced to the pagan palace, the banquet, and the drunken orgy that took place. God wants us to see His overruling in the affairs of men and Satan. This should be a comfort to God's children in this hour in which we live.

We are told that the king loved Esther. I must confess that I am not impressed by it at all. Those of you who have read my book on Ruth know the emphasis put upon the romance of Boaz and Ruth, the loveliest love story, I think, that has ever been told. It is a picture of Christ's love for His church. But I have to say that I do not find that quality in the story of Ahasuerus and Esther. This is an old, disappointed king who almost had reached the end of the road. I am reminded of the story of a foreigner who came to this country. He asked, "What is this, these three R's that I keep hearing about in this country?" Some wiseacre gave him this answer, "At twenty it is Romance; at thirty it is Rent; and at fifty it is Rheumatism." Well, it was rheumatism with the king. This is an old king marrying a lovely young girl. He is an old pagan with no knowledge at all of what real love in God might mean to a couple. I must say that I cannot see anything here to wax eloquent about or to say that this is a picture -- as some have done -- of Christ and His church.

However, the event is of utmost importance. It is thrilling to see this girl, belonging to a captive people, suddenly become queen over one of the greatest gentile empires the world has ever seen. The wave of anti-Semitism that was imminent would have blotted out these people, and God's entire purpose with Israel would have been frustrated; but when danger strikes, Esther is in a unique position. God moved her into that place.

Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king [[Esth. 2:18](#)].

You will remember that this book opened with a feast. Now we have another feast, Esther's feast. Since the king has a lovely queen to take Vashti's place, he suspends taxes for one year. If such a thing were done in our day, it would rock the world! It is interesting to see that the king did have the authority to suspend taxes for a year. We all would rejoice if they would conduct some kind of contest in Washington, D.C., that would help reduce taxes!

And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king's gate [[Esth. 2:19](#)].

Mordecai has a new position -- not a job, a position. He is sitting in the king's gate. This means that he is a judge, for the courthouse of the ancient world was the gate of the city. Most of the cities were walled, and out through the gate all the citizens would pass sooner or later. Court convened at the city gate, not at the courthouse in the town square. You may recall that the city gate was the place Boaz went to have a legal matter settled. Also, it is said of Lot that he sat in the gate, which meant that he had gotten into politics in Sodom and had a judgeship.

Look at Mordecai. Isn't it interesting that when Esther becomes queen the next thing you know Mordecai is a judge, sitting in the gate? That is nepotism, or getting your kinfolk into office. I do not know whether Mordecai was made judge because of his ability or because Esther whispered in the ear of the king, "This man Mordecai has been just like a father to me. He is a man of remarkable ability, and I think you ought to give him a good position." And the king may have said, "Well, that is interesting. We've just had an opening for a judge here at the east gate, and I'll give him that position." This is a very human book, you see, and politics haven't changed one bit, have they?

Esther had not yet shewed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him [[Esth. 2:20](#)].

This girl is a rather remarkable person. Even married to the king, she still takes instructions from the man who reared her. And I will say that I believe Mordecai is one of the outstanding men in Scripture to whom we have paid very little attention. He apparently was a man of remarkable ability.

At this point something takes place that seems extraneous, and yet it is upon this incident that the whole book hinges. As someone has said, "God swings big doors on little hinges." Again we see the providence of God; He is moving behind the scene here.

In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on king Ahasuerus.

And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king thereof in Mordecai's name.

And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out; therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king [[Esth. 2:21-23](#)].

This is an interesting incident. Mordecai was sitting at the gate. Crowds were coming and going through the gate. He heard two men talking, and he heard them mention the name of the king. He cupped his ears so he could hear what they were talking about and discovered they were plotting to kill the king. So Mordecai immediately got word to Esther about the plot.

This is a very familiar picture: an oriental potentate and fellows with long mustachios, hiding behind pillars, plotting against the king. Actually, intrigue in an oriental court was common; there always seemed to be someone who was after the king's job. Mordecai's new position gained him a vantage point so that he was able to overhear the plot.

After Mordecai told Esther about the plan to kill the king, Esther told her husband. I suppose she said to the king, "You remember that I recommended Mordecai as a judge, and you can see that he is already doing an excellent job. He has discovered a plot against your life." The FBI investigated and found it to be true. These fellows were then arrested. They didn't have a long, drawn out trial that spent taxpayers' money. The king ordered them to be put to death, and they were executed by hanging. This was to discourage

others who might attempt to plot against the king. Of course, they were very uncivilized in that day, but they did not go in for lawlessness and pampering criminals. This entire incident was written down in the chronicles of the king, in the minutes, if you please, of the kingdom of Persia.

It is interesting to see that something was omitted here. Mordecai was not rewarded or recognized for his service. I suppose he brooded over it many times, wondering why in the world he had been ignored. He wasn't even given a Boy Scout badge or a lifesaver button for saving the king's life. Certainly he deserved that much. Why was this incident passed by? God is overruling. By His providence, God is directing this entire affair.

Chapter 3

THEME: Haman and anti-Semitism

This is a chapter in the life of the Jew that has been duplicated many, many times. When you read this chapter, you can almost substitute the name of Pharaoh instead of Haman, or you can substitute the name of Hitler or Nasser -- in fact, there are many names that would fit in here. There never has been a time since Israel became a nation down in the land of Egypt to the present moment that there has not been a movement somewhere to exterminate them.

After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him [[Esth. 3:1](#)].

Here we are introduced to a man by the name of Haman. He is one in the long line of those who have led in a campaign of anti-Semitism. He is promoted by the king to the position that would correspond to prime minister. He was an Agagite. If you turn back to [1Samuel 15:8](#), you will find that Agagite was the royal family of the Amalekites. Saul should have obeyed God and destroyed the Agagites. If Saul had done what he had been commanded to do, his people would not have been in this situation, because the Agagites would have completely disappeared. God could see down through history and He knew what was coming. Saul's failure to exterminate the Agagites almost led to the extermination of his own people. But again, God is behind the scenes, keeping watch over His own.

No weapon is going to prosper against Israel. Many people thought that Hitler might become a world dictator. Our nation, in fear, rushed into World War II. Other folk said that we should not have been involved in that war. I agree with that. We should have let Germany and the other countries slug it out, and when they got so weak they could no longer fight, then we could have stepped in. There are those who said we should not have entered the Vietnam War. I agree with that. I think this idea of always shipping our manpower abroad is entirely wrong. We thought we stopped Hitler, but it was God who stopped him. God is going to stop Haman, too. Now we are beginning to see why God has moved Esther to the throne. If she had not been there, this anti-Semite Haman would have exterminated the Jews. That certainly was his intention.

And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence [[Esth. 3:2](#)].

The king sent out word that he had a new prime minister. Everyone was to bow before him and recognize his position. Now we have seen already that Mordecai is a judge at the gate. He has a political job, which means that he is one of the officials of the kingdom, and he must bow to Haman. But we are told that he did not bow to Haman. Friends, I am prepared to change my mind about Mordecai. I feel like throwing my hat up in the air because he refuses to reverence Haman. I think all of the other flunkies in the king's service went down on all fours when Haman passed by -- in that day they didn't just bend to the waist when they bowed.

I see now for the first time the hand of God beginning to move in the life of Mordecai. You may say, "But he is out of the will of God. How can God move in a case like that? He should have returned to his own land." Right! For reasons of his own he did not return but, being a Jew, his place was back in Palestine. It is clear that he is out of the will of God, but he is still recognizing God. Though he makes no appeal to Him anywhere in the Book of Esther, he does recognize God. Do you know how I have come to this conclusion? God's law to the Jews was explicit. They were not to bow to anything but God Himself. They were not to make an image or ever bow to an image. They were not to bow down to anything or anyone. And so when this man Haman comes by after his promotion, everybody who has a political job gets down on his face before him -- except one man, Mordecai. Believe me, he is obvious when he is the only one left standing!

Mordecai and Esther were not faithful enough to return to Jerusalem, but they were willing to jeopardize their lives in order to save their people. Therefore, I'm sorry for what I said previously about Mordecai.

Then the king's servants, which were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment?

Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he was a Jew [[Esth. 3:3-4](#)].

He was asked why he didn't bow, and for the first time Mordecai reveals that he is a Jew. Up to this time he has told no one. And you will remember that he had instructed Esther, when she entered the beauty contest, not to let anyone know her race. Even her husband did not know it. But now Mordecai tells them, "The reason I am not bowing to Haman is because I am a Jew." The minute he says that he is also telling them his religion. He worships only the true and living God; he bows to no idol, to no image, to no man. He had been taught in [Deuteronomy 6:4](#), "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD." He was to declare to the world, the ancient world, the world of idolatry, the unity of the Godhead. Today in a world of atheism, we are to declare the Trinity -- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Mordecai took a stand, and now the others know why. The Jew was known in the world of that day as a worshiper of the one and true God.

I feel like saying, "Hurrah for Mordecai!" I apologize for what I previously said about him. He is beginning now for the first time to take a stand for God, and it is going to cost him a great deal. I do not think he dreamed it would be so far-reaching as to touch all of his people, but he recognizes that it probably will cost him his job, and even his life.

And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.

And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai [[Esth. 3:5-6](#)].

In this passage Haman reveals that he is a small man. He should have ignored Mordecai. As Mordecai is beginning to stand out as a man of God, this man Haman begins to stand out in all of his ugliness as a man of Satan. The first thing we notice is his littleness. We are going to note all the way through the story that Haman is a little man. You will hear him later on crying on his wife's shoulder. He will say something like this, "I've got everything in the world I want; I can have anything in the kingdom, but that little Jew won't bow to me." It is a small man who will let that sort of thing bother him, and he is permitting it to disturb him a great deal.

Haman is going to attempt to do a terrible thing. He is going to try to destroy all the Jews that live in the kingdom of Ahasuerus. I am sure he knew nothing about God's promise to Abraham to bless those who blessed the Jews and curse those who cursed the Jews. But God makes good that promise. We have only to turn back the pages of history to find that the Jew has attended the funeral of every one of the nations that tried to exterminate him. Hitler tried to exterminate them. He thought he would get rid of them; yet today Hitler and his group are gone, but the Jew is still with us. Yes, God has promised to take care of His people. The fact that they have not been exterminated is in itself miraculous. God has indeed preserved them. And we will see Him do it in the Book of Esther.

In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar [[Esth. 3:7](#)].

Each day Haman's irritation grows. Every time he goes through the gate everybody goes down on his face except that little Jew Mordecai, and it disturbs him. He resolves to do something about it. When Haman discovered that Mordecai's refusal to bow to him was based upon his religious convictions, he decided that a nationwide massacre of the Jews would solve his problem.

Haman had the magicians cast the lot called Pur to decide on which day of the year the Jews would be destroyed. What the magicians and Haman did not realize was that God was the One who disposed the lot. God overruled in this situation. The lot fell in the last month of the year, which allowed time for Haman's plot to be discovered and stopped.

And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all

people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them.

If it pleases the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king's treasuries [[Esth. 3:8-9](#)].

Hamam brought it to the attention of Xerxes that there were some people living in his kingdom who were different. They were unusual; they followed the Mosaic Law. They were a people who should be exterminated. He convinced the king that the Jews were defying the king's laws and that their liquidation would bring a lot of wealth into his treasuries from their confiscated property. You will remember that Xerxes had recently been engaged in war, a costly one. He needed money to pay for the bills incurred. Perhaps Haman's idea would bring in enough money to take care of the deficit. The king, of course, was interested in that plan. Most politicians are interested in ways to raise more money, and this seemed like a way out for the king.

Xerxes had so little regard for life, as most potentates of that day did, that he did not even inquire who the people were that Haman wanted to exterminate. Haman doesn't know that Esther, the queen, happens to belong to that nationality. Xerxes himself does not know that his queen is Jewish and that he is signing away her life at this time.

And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy [[Esth. 3:10](#)].

Xerxes took a ring off his finger and gave it to Haman. It was his signet ring. The signet on the ring was pressed down in soft wax and that became the signature of the king. An order that had that signet stamped on it became the law of the kingdom. So Xerxes carelessly takes off his ring, hands it to Haman, and says in effect, "I don't know who they are and I don't care who they are, but if you feel they ought to be exterminated, then you go ahead and take care of the matter." What little regard Xerxes had for human life! He had dissipated the wealth of his kingdom against Greece, and it is variously estimated how many men perished in that campaign. Some feel that as many as two million men died in that war. It didn't seem to bother him one bit that so many had given their lives for a mistake that he had made.

And the king said unto Haman, The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee.

Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring.

And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth

day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey [[Esth. 3:11-13](#)].

The decree to destroy the Jews goes out as a law of the Medes and Persians. It took quite an effort to get this word out because, as you will recall, this empire stretched from India all the way across Asia down through the Fertile Crescent and Mediterranean Sea. It included some of Europe and all of Asia Minor and reached into Africa, through Egypt, and to Ethiopia. It was a vast kingdom. In it were people speaking many languages, a minimum of 127 languages. Also we have to take into account that there were tribes speaking various dialects in these provinces. This law had to be translated into these many tongues. This was quite a government project. The scribes had the job of translating and making enough copies of the law. This was a huge undertaking. When enough copies were made to cover the entire kingdom, they went out by camel and donkey, runner and messenger. On a certain day the Jews were going to be exterminated. This law was giving anti-Semitism full rein and permitting a great many people to do what apparently was in their hearts to do. On this designated day it would be legal to kill Jews.

This decree went out as a law of the Medes and Persians. We were told again and again at the very beginning of this book that a law once made was irrevocable. This law could not be changed; it could not be repealed. Another law, we will find out, was issued that counteracted it; yet this law had to stand on the books.

The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, that they should be ready against that day.

The posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed [[Esth. 3:14-15](#)].

The city of Shushan was perplexed. The Jews were not traitors. They had committed no great crime. Why should extreme measures be used like this to try to exterminate them? Although they may not have liked the Jews and considered them foreigners with differing customs, the city's inhabitants did not want to exterminate them. They could not understand Xerxes' permitting a decree like this to go out. At the palace late that evening you could see the riders getting their orders. Literally hundreds of men must have been pressed into service because of the extent of the kingdom. You could see these different riders being given copies of the new decree that had become law. One company started riding the road to the south, one to the north, another to the west, and to the east. They rode all night. When they came to a little town, they would nail on the bulletin board of that town the decree for the people to read the next morning. Then the riders kept going. When their horses got tired, they were given fresh horses to carry on the job. All over the kingdom is spread the decree that the Jews are to perish. They are "hastened," we are told, by the king's commandment. Yes, the city "Shushan was perplexed," but it didn't bother the king. He and old Haman sat down together and had cocktails that evening. What the king did not realize was that the decree was going to touch his queen.

My friend, anti-Semitism is an awful thing -- and it is with us today. Certainly no Christian should have any part in it.

Anti-Semitism had its origin down in the brickyards of Egypt, under the cruel hands of Pharaoh, where the Jews became a nation. From that time on, the great nations of the world have moved against them. It was the story of Assyria, and it was the story of Babylon that took them into captivity. In this Book of Esther we see how they fared in Persia. Rome also must plead guilty, and the Spanish Inquisition was largely leveled at the Jews. Then under Hitler in Germany it is estimated that six million Jews perished.

What is the reason of the thing that we call anti-Semitism? Let us analyze it briefly. There are two things that are behind it. The first reason is a natural one, and the second reason is supernatural.

The natural reason is simply this: They are unlovely. Now do not misunderstand me. There was a Christian Jew in Memphis who was a very personal friend of mine. He was a very personal friend of mine. He was a wonderful person. Let us face the facts. A godless person, Jew or Gentile, is unlovely. I know of no person more unlovely than a godless Gentile, nor do I know of a lovelier person than a Christian Jew. God saw us unlovely, undone, and unattractive; but by His sovereign grace He makes us new creatures in Christ. That same grace reached down and called the Jews a chosen people.

Then there is a supernatural reason why the Jews are hated. In the providence and design of God, those who have been the custodians of His written Word have been the people of the Jewish race. Our Bible has come to us through them. God chose them for that. They transmitted the Scriptures. Satan hates them because they have been the repository of the Scriptures and because the Lord Jesus Christ, after the flesh, came from them. Paul put it like this: "Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came . . ." ([Rom. 9:5](#)). There is no way of escaping it. And because of this, there is a supernatural hatred of Jews. This is certainly clear in the Bible. We know that God has chosen them as His people and as His nation. They are hated by Satan and, as a result, the nations of the world at times are fanned into fury against these people.

The law made by Xerxes could not be revoked. We have already seen one law that set aside Vashti the queen. That law could not be changed. Even the king could not change it. The law ordering the extermination of the Jews was signed by the king. It became the law of the Medes and Persians. There was no way it could be changed. How will God save His people? Another decree will have to be made. Somebody is going to have to intervene. God, by the way, has been preparing for this very thing.

When we first began the study of this little book, we talked about the providence of God. We looked at a scene at a pagan palace where a drunken orgy was taking place. Several thousand people were attending a banquet. A family scandal is revealed, and the queen, who refused to obey the king, is set aside. What does this have to do with God's saving His people? It has everything to do with it. God was moving, and He is going to continue to move in a mighty way. He has placed a person right next to the throne. She is going to be the means of saving the Jews. God moves in the affairs of men by His providence.

God's providence is illustrated in the story of the birth of Jesus Christ. Caesar Augustus signed a tax bill that decreed that all the world was to be taxed. When he signed that bill, he did not know that he was fulfilling prophecy. He did not know that the tax bill would

cause a maiden in Nazareth to go to Bethlehem, where her first child would be born. I think Caesar Augustus would have laughed and said, "I don't know anything about babies, but I do know about taxes." [Micah 5:2](#) foretold the birth of Christ in Bethlehem. Caesar signed a bill that caused Mary to be in Bethlehem at just the right time to give birth to the Lord Jesus Christ. God was in Caesar's palace. God was in the palace of Xerxes. "Standeth God in the shadows keeping watch over His own."

Chapter 4

THEME: For such a time as this

The terrible decree is going out to every corner of the kingdom. Now notice Mordecai's reaction:

When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry;

And came even before the king's gate: for none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth [[Esth. 4:1-2](#)].

When Mordecai heard about the decree to annihilate the Jews, he put on sackcloth and ashes. My, what a performance! He believed the decree; he knew it could not be changed. I would guess that there were roughly fifteen million Jews at that time in the kingdom. It would have been a terrible slaughter, so unnecessary and uncalled for. Because one petty official would not bow down to Haman, an entire race was to be exterminated. This was satanic, of course.

And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes [[Esth. 4:3](#)].

Do you notice that there is no call to prayer? You see, these people are out of the will of God. The decree of Cyrus, prophesied by Isaiah, had permitted them to return to Israel, but they did not return. They are out of God's will, and consequently there is no call to prayer whatsoever. But they go through the remainder of the ritual: fasting, putting on of sackcloth and ashes and great mourning.

They believed the decree that had gone out from Xerxes. it was the law of the Medes and the Persians, which was unalterable according to these historical books and also according to the Book of Daniel. And you remember that even Xerxes himself, when he had put aside his beautiful queen, could never take her again because the decree had been made that she was to come no more before the king. Even he could not change his own law after it had been made. And so when this decree of death came throughout the empire, the Jews believed it and mourned in sackcloth and ashes.

Conspicuously absent today (the church, I think, is responsible for it) is conviction concerning sin -- not only in the hearts and lives of the unsaved, but in the hearts and lives of believers. The average believer says, "Yes, I trust Christ." But he has no real conviction of sin in his life at all. It is absent in contemporary church life. When is the

last time that you heard a sinner, saved or lost, cry out to God for mercy? At the beginning of my ministry I saw a great many tears, I saw people cry out to God. I do not see that today. Even in evangelistic crusades there is a lot of "coming forward," but there is that lack of weeping over sin in the lives of folk. Why? They just don't believe God means it, my friend. They do not believe that God intends to enforce judgment against sin and the sinner who will hold to it and not turn to Christ.

Mordecai knew and believed the seriousness of the decree. He tore his clothes and put on sackcloth with ashes. He went out into the center of the city and cried with a loud and bitter cry. Jews all over the kingdom mourned, fasted, wept, and wailed. They all believed the seriousness of the decree.

So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told it her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: but he received it not [[Esth. 4:4](#)].

Queen Esther, feeling perfectly safe and secure as queen, was embarrassed by the conduct of Mordecai her adoptive father. Here he was, out in the city, walking up and down, moaning, wailing, and groaning. So what does she do? She sends him a sporty new suit of clothes. They were gay, gaudy, expensive, and fine. The colors were probably bright. But, you see, all the bright colors and new clothes will not change the king's edict. Mordecai would not receive the clothes. They would not remove the stigma.

There is an application here. The covering of religion will not remove the fact that man is a guilty sinner before God. Neither will religion alter the fact that the wages of sin is death.

People deal with sin in many different ways. Some try the gaudy clothes method. They refuse to believe that man is a sinner. They reach out for any garment that might hide from them the reality of sin. Others put on the gaudy clothes of reformation. They say that sin is just a little mistake, and they try to cover it. They think sin can be reformed.

Someone has said that the modern pulpit has become a place where a mild-mannered man gets up before a group of mild-mannered people and urges them to be more mild-mannered. Friends, I cannot think of anything more insipid than that. No wonder the world has passed by the church. We don't need reforming; we need to be regenerated. We need to be born again.

Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, was religious, but our Lord said to him, ". . . Ye must be born again" ([John 3:7](#)). We need a new nature because we have a sinful nature, and that sinful nature is not going to heaven, my friend. You have to come to the Lord Jesus Christ and trust Him. He died on the cross for you. He took your place and has already paid the penalty of your sin. All you have to do is accept what has been done for you. If you go to heaven, it will be because you trusted the One who died for you.

There is another kind of gaudy clothes that people wear known as "education." They say that sin is selfishness. All you have to do is educate and train folk and they won't be selfish. I had a sister who was younger than I was. My Dad used to bring us a sack of gumdrops when he came home from work. He would tell me that I was to divide the

candy with her. I always took the first piece, and she would protest because sometimes it worked out that I also took the last piece. Sometimes I took the first piece when it was really my sister's turn. May I say that all of the instruction and education given to me never kept me from being selfish. And don't try to kid me, it hasn't helped you, either.

Many years ago. Dr. Shaler Matthews from the University of Chicago's School of Religion came up with this definition of sin: "Sin is the backward pull of an outward good." Think that one over for awhile. If you take away all of the modifiers, you see that he is saying that sin is good! And that is what religion finally winds up telling you. May I say to you that you need a new garment. You need the righteousness of Christ. That is the only thing that will enable you to stand before God.

Now Mordecai was not about to accept any gaudy clothes from his daughter, the queen. When the clothes came back to her, she knew that something serious was going on. Esther knew that it was not something minor that caused her father to return the clothes.

Then called Esther for Hatach, one of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai, to know what it was, and why it was [\[Esth. 4:5\]](#).

Esther wants some answers. She wants to know what has caused Mordecai to put on sackcloth and ashes.

So Hatach went forth to Mordecai unto the street of the city, which was before the king's gate [\[Esth. 4:6\]](#).

Of course as queen she could not have gone to him herself. So she sends a messenger.

And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them.

Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to shew it unto Esther, and to declare it unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people.

And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai [\[Esth. 4:7-9\]](#).

Mordecai sent a message back to Queen Esther which said in effect, "The reason that I am in sackcloth and ashes is that our people, you and I, have come under an awful decree of death." Then he gave the messenger a copy of the decree so that Esther could read it for herself. I wish that folk who say that the Bible does not teach that man is a sinner would read what God's Word says. It is all there in black and white. If they will read it, they will see that God declares we are sinners and are under His sentence of death.

So the messenger returned to Esther with Mordecai's message and a copy of the king's decree.

Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai [[Esth. 4:10](#)].

After Esther heard Mordecai's message and read the decree, she sent him another message.

All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days [[Esth. 4:11](#)].

In other words, "That's too bad. I am sorry to hear it. I didn't know about it before." And she adds, "But I have not been called into the king's presence now for thirty days. I do not know his attitude toward me -- and you know what the law is." As was the case in every kingdom of that day, anyone who dared go into the presence of the king without being summoned would be summarily, automatically, put to death -- unless the king extended his sceptre to him. Xerxes was noted for his fits of temper; he could have put his queen to death if she had gone in without being called. So she sent back word to Mordecai, "If I go in, it may mean death to me."

And they told to Mordecai Esther's words [[Esth. 4:12](#)].

Then Mordecai returned to her this memorable message:

Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.

For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? [[Esth. 4:13-14](#)].

We must remember that there had been another queen and a decree which had set her aside. Esther was probably taking warning from that, but, if she thinks the decree will protect her, she is wrong. The decree is that all of the Jews are to be slain, and she is Jewish. Mordecai puts it on the line: "Just because you happen to be the queen does not exempt you from the execution because it will reach every Jew in the kingdom, and it will also reach the queen." We will find out later that Xerxes did not know that she was a Jewess.

Mordecai went on to say that if Esther held her peace then deliverance would come from another source. Some day when I see Mordecai (and I do expect to see him), I would like to ask him what he had in mind when he said that deliverance would arise from another place. I have thought this over, and I ask you the question: "What other place was there to which they could turn?" Where could deliverance come to them except from God? He was their only hope at this time, and I am confident that Mordecai had that in mind. God would move in another direction. He must have known that deliverance would come because he was acquainted with the promises that God had made to Abraham.

So Mordecai challenges Esther. Xerxes was a world ruler. Would deliverance come from the north, east, south, or west? There was not a person on the topside of the earth who could have delivered her. So he said to Esther, "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" I think Mordecai now detects that the hand of God has been moving and that Esther is on the throne for a purpose.

We begin to see God by His providence moving now in the affairs of the nation. It is obvious that Esther did not accidentally win a beauty contest. She was not accidentally the one who became queen. She is there for a very definite purpose, and God has been arranging this all the time. He is prepared for this event. God knows what is coming. That is why, friends, we can trust Him. When we put our hand in His hand, He has the power to hold us. He knows what is going to happen tomorrow and next month and next year. He will care for us. All we have to do is trust Him.

Mordecai is becoming a noble man now in my estimation. He is revealing that he is taking a stand for God. He is willing to die for God. Watch Esther now. She is a queen, every inch a queen.

Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer,

Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.

So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him [[Esth. 4:15-17](#)].

These are the words of a noble woman. She tells Mordecai to gather all of the Jews in the city together to fast. She and her maidens would do the same. She would go to the king for help, and she was willing to perish if need be. Once again you will notice that nothing is said about prayer. Why doesn't she pray? Because she is out of the will of God. Why don't the Jews pray? They, too, are out of God's will. When Jonah was on the boat running away from God, nothing is said about prayer. He was out of the will of God. He shouldn't have been on that boat. It is hard to pray when you are out of God's will. It is possible that some of the Jews prayed, but it certainly is not mentioned.

Esther's decision to go before the king is a very brave act. But, beloved, there is One more noble. He vaulted the battlements of heaven, came down to earth, and took upon Himself our human flesh. He did not say, "If I perish, I perish." He said ". . . the Son of man came . . . to give his life a ransom for many" ([Matt. 20:28](#)).

Chapter 5

THEME: The sceptre of grace

Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house [[Esth. 5:1](#)].

The king was sitting on his royal throne opposite the entrance to the palace. Around him were his court attendants dressed in all of their finery. Imagine the color! In addition to that were the awnings, the tapestries, the gold and silver and marble of the throne room. The king was probably conducting state business when Esther stepped out from an alcove, or from behind a pillar, and stood there in her royal apparel. And I want to say, friends, that she was beautiful.

And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre [[Esth. 5:2](#)].

Esther had prepared herself to appear before the king. You will remember that when she came the first time before the king and won the beauty contest that she required none of the fine clothing or elaborate accessories that the other girls had required. By her natural beauty she had won, and the king had fallen in love with her. But this time I am sure that she spent a great deal of time on her dress. We are told that "Esther put on her royal apparel," which means that she put on the finest that she had. It meant that she looked the best that she could. In fact, if I may use the common colloquialism of the street, she knocked the king's eyes out! I tell you, she was lovely.

When she stepped into that royal court and waited -- it was certainly a dramatic moment - - the king looked at her. The question is: Will he raise the sceptre or will he not? And in that moment I am confident this Hebrew girl prayed, although there is no record of it. She must have recognized how helpless and hopeless she really was. And then the king held out the golden sceptre to her, and possibly smiled. Then she advanced and put her hand on the sceptre, which was the custom of the day.

What a picture we have here. In this book I have been emphasizing the law of the Medes and Persians and comparing their law to the Law of God. God's law says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die . . ." ([Ezek. 18:20](#)). And, friends, God has never changed that. It is as true now as it ever was. That is God's law. It is immutable. He could not change that without changing His character.

There is another side to the story. We see that in holding out the sceptre to Queen Esther, the king was giving her her life. May I say to you, our God holds out the sceptre to mankind today. It is true that ". . . all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" ([Rom. 3:23](#)). It is true that we are ". . . dead in trespasses and sins" ([Eph. 2:1](#)). It is true that ". . . the soul that sinneth, it shall die" ([Ezek. 18:4](#)). But, you see, our God had to overcome that tremendous law, and the only way in the world He could overcome it was for Him to come to this earth Himself, and take upon Himself our sins, and pay that penalty -- for that law was not abrogated, and it is not abrogated today. When God saved you, my friend, it was because Somebody else paid the penalty for your sins. He died a substitutionary death upon that cross for you and me. As a result of that, God holds out to the earth the sceptre of grace, and He says to any individual, "You can come to Me. You can touch that sceptre of grace. You can receive salvation from Me."

Now Esther has come into the presence of the king, and he recognizes immediately that she would never have made this effort if an emergency had not arisen.

Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom [[Esth. 5:3](#)].

He knows she did not come to him in this manner because of some petty problem. He knows she did not come to ask for money to buy a new hat or to suggest that they go out to dinner at the local restaurant. He knows something is troubling his queen. He sees that she is trembling and greatly distressed. He wants her to feel comfortable, and so he says, "It shall be given thee to the half of the kingdom." This is not an idle expression. To make her feel at ease, he hands her a blank check and invites her to fill in the amount.

And Esther answered, If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him [[Esth. 5:4](#)].

Esther does not make her request known right away. She simply invites the king to lunch and asks him to bring Haman too. She wants Haman present when she lets the king know that the thing he has demanded is not only the death of the Jews but her death also.

What Esther did was an audacious and brave thing. She knew she was the only help for her people. After all, God had placed her in the position of being queen by His providence. I am sure that Esther would never have said that she was there by the will of God. In fact, she does not even mention the name of God. But she did go into the presence of the king knowing that it might mean her death. The die is cast.

My friend, we are all going to stand before the King of kings some day. Every believer will stand before Him to see whether or not he will receive a reward. This judgment will be at the Bema seat of Christ. There is another judgment where only the lost will appear. This will be at the Great White Throne, where they will be judged according to their works.

As the king held out the sceptre to Esther, and she stepped up and touched it, so God holds out the sceptre of grace to us today; and He asks us to come and touch it by faith, accepting what He has to offer. He is not gracious to us because we are beautiful. My mirror tells me I'm not beautiful, and I'm ugly on the inside, too. Sin comes out of the human heart. We hear much about the fact that we should take care of all the pollution -- and I am all for it -- but I want to start where all the trouble begins, which is the human heart. God is holding out the sceptre of grace to all who will receive His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then the king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther hath said. So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared [[Esth. 5:5](#)].

You can see the feeling of the king in this verse. He said, "You tell Haman that Esther has invited us to dinner and that he is to come that he may do as Esther has said." The king has been very generous to Haman. He has made him prime minister. He gave Haman his ring and let him send out the request that he wanted to slay the Jews. But when the comparison is made with Queen Esther, Haman must obey her. She is the queen. So this puts her in a very favorable light indeed. The king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed [[Esth. 5:6](#)].

At the banquet Esther is obviously nervous, and the king can see that there is something that is deeply troubling her. He asks her what her request is and offers her up to half of the kingdom. As we have seen, this idiomatic expression means she can have anything she wants. He sees that she is still anxious, so he hands her this blank check.

There is a lesson here. God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, has given us a blank check. Paul could say in [Philippians 4:19](#): "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." God has given us a blank check, but the amount is not filled in, even though He has signed it. How wonderful it is to have such a King. But He is more than a King. He is our Savior. He is the Savior of the world. He is holding out the sceptre of grace to a lost world.

Why is this cruel king being so gracious and patient with Esther? [Proverbs 21:1](#) says, "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will." In the story of Esther, the Lord is moving the king in a definite way.

Then answered Esther, and said, My petition and my request is:

If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do to-morrow as the king hath said [[Esth. 5:7-8](#)].

Esther still does not have the courage to express her request to the king, so she says, "I am having another banquet tomorrow. We have just had a smorgasbord today, but you come back tomorrow and I will prepare a real banquet. Then I will let you know what my request is." You can see the fear that is in the heart of this girl. There was nothing more for the king and Haman to do but to finish the meal and then depart.

Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai [[Esth. 5:9](#)].

Haman came out from the banquet very happy that he only had been the guest of the king and queen. His ego has been greatly expanded. He had made such a hit with the queen that she invited him back the next day for another banquet. This section illustrates that "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" ([Prov. 16:18](#)). The Greeks also have a proverb. It goes something like this: "Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad."

As Haman left the banquet, all the functionaries of the kingdom bow before him -- except one, Mordecai, a judge, who stands erect. You would think that a man in Haman's position would ignore a little thing like Mordecai's refusal to bow to him. But he is not going to ignore it. He is full of indignation against Mordecai, but he restrains himself for the time being. He thinks, "I'll get even with you in a few days."

Nevertheless Haman refrained himself: and when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife.

And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king [[Esth. 5:10-11](#)].

Haman is certainly playing the fool. He wants to do a little bragging. As you may have noticed, when a man starts bragging, there are usually three areas he talks about. First he boasts about his riches, the money he makes. Then he talks about his fine children -- or grandchildren (that's what I do). Then he will generally boast about his promotion and high position. Haman went all the way. He boasted in all three areas.

Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and to-morrow am I invited unto her also with the king [[Esth. 5:12](#)].

There is another thing that men boast about. They like to boast about being great with the ladies. He had had lunch with the queen today, and tomorrow he was going to have dinner with her! Haman was very human as well as being a rascal and villain. He does not know what is in store for him. He would do well to turn down the queen's invitation, but this man will not do that.

Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate [[Esth. 5:13](#)].

There is one little fly in the ointment. He cannot get over the fact that Mordecai won't bow to him. All of the things on the credit side of the ledger don't mean a thing when compared to the indignity given him by Mordecai. Someone has said that you can always tell the size of a man by the things that irritate him. If little things irritate him, he is a little man. If it takes big things to irritate him, he is a big man.

My friend, what bothers you? Do little things like that annoy you? Oh, don't let insignificant things mar your life. That is the mark of littleness. Yet most of us must confess that it is the small things, the "little foxes that spoil the vines" as far as our own lives are concerned.

Haman revealed himself to be a little man. After all, Mordecai was only a judge, a petty judge, in the kingdom. Haman was the prime minister. Ignore the fellow! Not Haman. "All this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew, sitting at the king's gate."

Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him. Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and tomorrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused the gallows to be made [[Esth. 5:14](#)].

Zeresh, his wife, and his friends suggested that he build a gallows for Mordecai. So late that evening they built a gallows fifty cubits (that's about seventy-five) feet high! Think

of that! Remember that the meaning of the name Mordecai, is "little" -- he was a short fellow. To erect a gallows seventy-five feet high on which to hang a short fellow reveals the resentment, the hatred, and the bitterness in his heart. However, with this happy solution Haman goes to bed.

Chapter 6

THEME: When a king could not sleep at night

On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king [[Esth. 6:1](#)].

The fact that the king could not sleep seems to be a very small thing, but God uses small things. Also, I am of the opinion that the king had many sleepless nights. As Shakespeare said, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." There were nights when I am sure the king felt that his life was in jeopardy. But this night that the king could not sleep was the most eventful night in the history of the empire because it is the turning point in the Book of Esther.

Have you noticed that God uses the little things to carry out His program? Years before in Egypt God brought together a woman's heart and a baby's cry when Pharaoh's daughter found the baby Moses in the Nile River. By this He changed the destiny of the nation. A supposedly unimportant thing occurred at the palace of Shushan -- the king could not sleep. So he commanded his servants to bring the uninteresting records of the kingdom to him. They were read before the king. Evidently the reading of these records was conducive to sleep. They were the king's sleeping pill. The fatal hour had come, and now we are going to see the hand of God begin to move.

A servant was summoned who began to drone off this record, which is like a log or the minutes of the kingdom. I do not mean to be unlovely, but to me the most boring thing in the world is to listen to minutes. Have you ever heard any minutes that were interesting? I never have. I have been on all kinds of boards, and I've gotten off every board I could get off because I don't like to listen to the minutes. They are boring. On the nights that the king could not sleep, he would say, "Bring in the minutes. Let's read them again." Soon the king would drop off to sleep.

On this particular night the servants just happened to turn to a certain place in the minutes. Did I say happened to turn? Little things are beginning to pile up and reveal God's hand in the glove of human circumstances. God is moving. He is overruling. It was no accident that Esther became queen. It was no accident that she presented herself to the king and found favor in his sight. It was no accident that he accepted her invitation to a banquet. Now he is unable to sleep, and it is no accident that the servant began to read at a certain place.

And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.

And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him [[Esth. 6:2-3](#)].

You talk about the Mafia; these two fellows belonged to the Mafia of that day. Mordecai overheard these two men plotting, the kind of plotting that we always think of in connection with the Persian Empire -- shadowy figures behind pillars, plotting in low tones of putting a dagger in the king. Mordecai passed that word on to Queen Esther, and she notified the king. That incident was recorded in the chronicles of the kingdom. When the chamberlain read this, the king became alert for a moment. He rose up in bed and said, "By the way, you didn't read there -- or I must have missed it -- was this man Mordecai rewarded?" The chamberlain looked down and read the next set of minutes and replied, "No, he was never rewarded." The king said, "The man who saved my life must be rewarded!"

While all of this was going on in the palace, there is a knock at the outside door.

And the king said, Who is in the court? Now Haman was come into the outward court of the king's house, to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

And the king's servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in.

So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself? [[Esth. 6:4-6](#)].

Just at the time the king discovered Mordecai had never been rewarded for saving his life, Haman was heard coming into the outer court. The king said, "Who is in the court?" It was Haman. He hadn't slept too well either. He had come to the king's house to get permission to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him. Apparently Haman had the privilege of coming into the king's presence at any time. When Haman came in, the king brought him into the conversation without giving him any background. He had come to ask for the life of Mordecai at the same moment the king is prepared to reward him!

These circumstances reveal the providence of God. In the shadows God is keeping watch over His own. Although these people are out of the will of God, in the land far away from where God wants them, they are still not out from under His direct leading. These providential dealings could not have been accidental.

When Haman walks into the king's presence, he is greeted with the question, "What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour?" Haman thought the king was talking about him. After all, he had been made prime minister. He had been given the ring of the king -- he had paid a certain sum of money, true, but he was able to get permission to exterminate the Jewish people en toto -- and certainly there is no one else in the kingdom that he can think of that the king would delight to honor. But the king was thinking of Mordecai.

And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour,

Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head:

And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour [[Esth. 6:7-9](#)].

The true nature of Haman is revealed in his answer. I am sure you can see what is in his heart; Haman had his eye upon the throne. It was his intention, when the time was right, to eliminate the king. That is the story of the Persian monarchs anyway. It was difficult for a man to stay on the throne very long. Even in Israel's history, as recorded in 1 and 2 Kings, if it were not so tragic, it would be humorous to see how short a time some of the kings ruled. Some of them only made it through two months. When a king sat on his throne and looked around him, he didn't know who was his friend and who was his enemy. He couldn't imagine because he realized that any man who was lifted up would attempt to slay him in order that he might become king. Obviously this was in the heart of Haman.

Haman was thinking, "To whom would the king delight to do honor more than to myself? You let me have the apparel of the king, put the crown on my head, let me ride the king's horse, let it be announced by a herald when I go through the streets." What is he doing? Haman is preparing the people for the day when the crown and the royal apparel will be his. I am of the opinion that the king would suspect this type of thing, for he recognized that Haman was thinking of himself and certainly not of Mordecai.

Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken [[Esth. 6:10](#)].

There was nothing that could have been asked of Haman that would have been more displeasing, more ignominious, or more distasteful than to put the royal garments on Mordecai, put him on the king's horse, and lead him through the streets proclaiming that this is the man that the king delighted to honor! To accord him this honor was mortification beyond words to Haman. He hated Mordecai.

Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour [[Esth. 6:11](#)].

Instead of leading Mordecai through the streets in honor, Haman had intended to hang him on the gallows. The humiliation of Haman at this point is absolutely unspeakable. You can imagine the feeling that he had as he led this horse, with the man who would not

bow to him seated on it, through the street. He had a gallows at home, seventy-five feet high, on which to hang him!

And Mordecai came again to the king's gate. But Haman hastened to his house mourning, and having his head covered.

And Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends every thing that had befallen him. Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him.

And while they were yet talking with him, came the king's chamberlains, and hastened to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared [[Esth. 6:12-14](#)].

Finally the ordeal was over. Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman hurried to his house, mourning, and having his head covered. Shame beyond shame. He told his wife and friends everything that had happened. Zeresh was a nice little wife, was she not? She suggested that the gallows be built, and now she is telling Haman, "I told you so. You're beginning to fall."

It is not exactly comforting to have your wife and friends suggest that probably tomorrow will be your last day! Things are happening thick and fast. Haman no sooner gets home and explains to his wife and his wise men what had happened than there is a knock at the door. The king's servants tell Haman to hurry up, the banquet is ready that he had promised to attend. He had looked forward to this dinner, you remember, and had boasted about the fact that he was the only one whom the queen had invited with the king to attend her banquet. He is going to be late for the dinner that he had been looking forward to, but the events were taking place so fast he couldn't keep up with them. Things are beginning to happen to his disadvantage. He has no control over circumstances. Do you know why? Because God is overruling everything and seeing to it that Haman's plot does not succeed.

Chapter 7

THEME: The man who came to dinner but died on the gallows

So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen.

And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom [[Esth. 7:1-2](#)].

Haman went to the banquet with mingled feelings. He is thrilled that the queen has invited him to dinner, but he is still mortified at the honor given to Mordecai. I am of the opinion that at this moment Haman does not quite understand why Mordecai had been honored and he was passed by.

Now Esther has, if I may use the expression, screwed up her courage, after the second day, to tell the king the thing that is in her heart. She could not do it before, but now she

is ready -- even though she is nervous. Once again the king renews his overture to the queen. He says, "Queen Esther, what is your petition, and it shall be granted to you." Once again he offers her up to half the kingdom. This is the third time the king has asked the queen what is on her mind.

Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request.

For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage [[Esth. 7:3-4](#)].

When Esther spoke, it was a frightful thing that she revealed. Both the king and Haman were startled because neither of them knew her nationality. Her request was that her life and the lives of her people be spared. When Mordecai had entered her in the beauty contest and also when she had become queen, he had instructed her not to tell her nationality, not to reveal to anyone that she was a Jewess. So she had kept this fact to herself all of this time.

Haman, as you remember, had gotten an edict from the king that all the Jews in the kingdom were to be destroyed. He did not know that the queen was a Jewess. She now identifies herself with her people. So far removed that she did not even want to be known as a Jewess, she now takes her place with her condemned people. For her to do this in that day was also to identify herself with her religion and with her God, because they both go together.

She said to the king, "Although the king would have suffered a great loss, I would have kept quiet if we were just going to be sold into slavery. But that isn't the problem -- we are to be slain on a certain day!" She wanted him to know that the Jews had been betrayed and were to be destroyed as a people.

The king was absolutely amazed. Who would dare attempt to destroy the queen? And who would dare attempt to destroy her people? What she said was as shocking a statement as the king ever expected to hear. The queen and her people were going to perish.

Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so? [[Esth. 7:5](#)].

The king is startled. He doesn't dream that there is any such thing taking place in his kingdom. He apparently does not recognize even yet who the people are to be slain. Frankly, this man had little regard for life. If you read the secular campaign of Xerxes which he made into Europe against Greece, you will find that he threw men about as if they all were expendable. He lost thousands and thousands of men in that campaign, and it did not disturb him one bit. Human life was very cheap in that day. The thing that now disturbs him is that they are the people of Esther. His queen is in mortal danger. So the king asks, "Who is he? Where is he? Who would presume to do such a thing?"

I still don't think it has yet dawned on Haman what is really taking place. He did not know that the decree to slay the nation Israel would affect the queen. He did not know she was Jewish. There he was at the banquet table, reclining on a couch -- the prime minister, with the full confidence of the king.

Ahasuerus has asked who hatched this plot, and Esther now reveals her bravery. She is putting her life on the line by answering the king's question.

And Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman.
Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen [[Esth. 7:6](#)].

Haman has no answer for that. He is dumbfounded to learn that Esther is Jewish.

God is moving behind the scenes. God is watching over His own. No weapon formed against Israel will prosper. God is going to bless those who bless the Jews and curse those who curse the Jews. The providence of God is going to keep the children of Israel.

The king is so startled at the sudden turn of events that he leaves the banquet table and goes into the garden. After all, he is implicated to a certain extent. And so he leaves to think this matter over.

And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath went
into the palace garden: and Haman stood up to make request for
his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil
determined against him by the king [[Esth. 7:7](#)].

The king needed to think things through. He simply could not believe that Haman would do such a thing. But the queen had begged and pleaded for her life because of Haman. He believed his queen. The king needed time to cool off a little so that he could think clearly about Esther's plight and about Haman, his trusted adviser and prime minister.

While the king was walking in the garden, Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen. This man who was so glib in asking that others be put to death now becomes like a slave. He grovels at the feet of the queen. He realizes that the king is not going to let this thing pass and that evil is determined against him. He knows that the queen is his only hope. He is mad with fear, and so he gets down on his knees to plead for his life in a craven way.

Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of
the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon
Esther was. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before
me in the house? As the word went out of the king's mouth, they
covered Haman's face [[Esth. 7:8](#)].

As Haman was begging for his life, he could see that he was getting nowhere. He knew he was going to be punished for the evil he had done, so in his madness he began to pull himself up on her couch. You will recall that it was the custom to recline on couches while dining. About this time the king returned and, seeing Haman and the queen, said, "Will he force the queen also before me in the house?" Haman, coward that he was, was clawing in terror at her couch. He was beside himself with fear. The king says in effect, "What in the world is this man trying to do there pawing at my queen?"

Notice that King Ahasuerus does not have to issue an order at all. He just came in from the garden, saw what was taking place, made the statement, and those who are standing by know what to do. It is interesting to note that the servants did not make a move until the king spoke. They were simply standing by, watching. You see, the queen had not yet called for any help. She was too frightened and filled with fear to call for help. But when the king spoke, these great big fellows stepped up and took Haman. They not only placed him under palace guard but also under house arrest.

And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king,
Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made
for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the
house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon.

So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for
Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified [[Esth. 7:9-10](#)].

The king did not waste any time. He was not only the arresting officer, he was also the supreme court. Haman died the same night on the very gallows he had built for Mordecai. This is a revelation of a great truth that runs all the way through the Word of God. Paul annunciated it for believers in [Galatians 6:7](#), "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Is it not interesting that the very gallows that Haman had prepared to hang an innocent man on is the gallows on which he is hanged?

Jacob had this experience. He deceived his father. Oh, he was a clever boy. He put on Esau's clothes. Old Isaac smelled them and said, "It smells just like my son Esau." They didn't have any of these lovely deodorants in that day, and I want to tell you, when Esau came in, even if you did not hear him, your senses told you he had arrived. And so Jacob put that goatskin on his hands, and blind old Isaac reached out and said, "It feels like him." Jacob thought he was clever. He is God's man, but God did not let him get by with it. One day when he was old and the father of twelve sons, they brought to him the coat of many colors, dipped in the blood of a goat, and they said, "Is this your son's coat?" Old Jacob broke down and wept. He too was deceived about his favorite son.

Paul knew a great deal about the operation of this law in his own experience. He is the man who apparently gave the orders for the stoning of Stephen -- they put their clothes at his feet. He was in charge. But he did not get by with it. You may say, "Well, he was converted. He came to Christ and his sins were forgiven." Yes, they were forgiven, but chickens always come home to roost. Whatever a man sows, that is what comes up, friend. Paul had a harvest, and his seed did come up. On his first missionary journey he went into the Galatian country and came to Lystra, where they stoned him and left him for dead. Paul had experienced the truth of these words, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." God is not mocked.

This man Haman is experiencing the same thing. He learned it the hard way. Here is a man who went to a banquet and found out it was a necktie party, and they hanged him. [Psalm 37:35-36](#) says, "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." Listen to what the psalmist says. It is interesting. Little man, you can have

your day. You can be a villain if you want to be one. You can run against God's plan and purpose for you, but you won't defeat God, because you are going to pass off the stage. That is what happened to Haman.

You and I stand guilty before God as sinners. We deserve exactly the condemnation of Haman. You may say, "I never committed a crime like that." Who said you did? But you just happen to have the same kind of human nature that he had, which is in rebellion against God, which is opposed to God. And in that state, while you were dead in trespasses and sins, Christ died for you, took your place on the cross. My friend, if you will trust Him, He will be your Savior.

Chapter 8

THEME: The message of hope that went out from the king

Although Haman is dead, the threat of death still hangs over every Jew. The decree he sent forth that Jews may be slain on a certain day is still in effect. Because the decree is a law of the Medes and Persians it cannot be changed. That presents a real problem. What is the solution? This chapter will answer that question.

On that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jews' enemy unto Esther the queen. And Mordecai came before the king: for Esther had told what he was unto her.

And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman [[Esth. 8:1-2](#)].

For the first time Esther let it be known that Mordecai was her adoptive father -- Mordecai, the man whose refusal to bow to Haman occasioned this terrible decree.

This passage indicates that the king was quite free with the use of his ring. It was a powerful and important ring. It could be pressed down into wax and make a law that would destroy a people. This was the ring he passed on to Haman when he was prime minister. It is the ring he now passes on to Mordecai. I feel that the ring is in good hands now, but the king certainly seems to be careless in passing it around.

And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews [[Esth. 8:3](#)].

Esther cried to the king for help, but nothing could be done to change the decree. It could not be changed in any shape or form. Even the king could not change the law.

Again the king is gracious and extends his sceptre.

Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose and stood before the king.

And said, If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing

in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the king's provinces:

For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred? [[Esth. 8:4-6](#)].

Esther makes it quite plain to the king that the judgment against Haman is of no avail unless something is done to save her people. Something must be done to save them.

Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews [[Esth. 8:7](#)].

It is true that the king gave to Esther and to Mordecai the house of Haman, but that did not spare the Jews at all. Things were still no better for the Jews than they were before Haman's death.

Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse [[Esth. 8:8](#)].

Mordecai now acts swiftly.

Then were the king's scribes called at that time in the third month, that is, the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth day thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which are from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language [[Esth. 8:9](#)].

Again the scribes are called in to make copies of the new decree in every language in the kingdom.

And he wrote in the king Ahasuerus' name, and sealed it with the king's ring, and sent letters by posts on horseback, and riders on mules, camels, and young dromedaries:

Wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey.

Upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, namely, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar [[Esth. 8:10-12](#)].

The original decree is not altered in any way. It cannot be. It stands. But now another decree is made and sent out just as the first one was. It is signed by the king. The entire power of the king, as evidenced in his army and his officers, is now on the side of the Jews. This changes the entire picture, you see. When this new decree comes to the Jews, their hearts are filled with joy and gladness.

As we read this record, we can see the picture. It must have been late in the evening that Queen Esther had gone into the presence of the king to plead for her people. Now the new decree is written and signed with the king's ring. The kingdom was polyglot -- many languages were spoken. You can see that all the amanuenses were summoned to write the decree in the languages of the 127 provinces -- probably there were hundreds of copies for each language.

The kingdom employed all means of communication common to that day. Heralds were sent on horseback, on mules, on camels, and on dromedaries -- across the Arabian Desert, up the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, down into India, and some into Africa. The heralds were riding in every direction getting this decree out as quickly as possible into every village and hamlet in the kingdom. This new decree provides a way of escape for the Jews. If they receive the message in time -- and believe it -- they can save their lives.

This is probably one of the most wonderful pictures of our salvation in Scripture. It is not an illustration that is used very much today, but it is a picture straight from God. "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" ([1Cor. 10:11](#)). God has sent out a decree. It says, ". . . the soul that sinneth, it shall die" ([Ezek. 18:4](#)). This does not only refer to certain people on skid row or some criminals; it refers to everyone. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" ([Rom. 3:23](#), italics mine). "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" ([Isa. 64:6](#), italics mine). God cannot save us today by perfection because we cannot offer it. God cannot save us by imperfection because He cannot lower His standard. We belong to a lost race. That is the predicament of humanity. That is the problem of the human family. We like to think that the problem is somewhere else, in someone else's heart, but it is right in our own hearts. Out of the heart proceed all the evil things. The world is polluted. It is not only the rivers and the air; the human heart is polluted. God has to judge. Men are sinners and need a Savior. Many people don't like to hear that. Many churches today have become liberal, and liberalism is based on weakness. The men in the pulpit do not have the courage to stand up and tell people that they are sinners and need a Savior. Of course, it is an unpopular message. All of us would rather be flattered. But it is God's decree, and it stands unalterable. It means eternal death to ignore it.

But thank God, another decree has gone out from the throne of God. It is: ". . . be ye reconciled to God" ([2Cor. 5:20](#)). We are ambassadors in this world today. An ambassador is the highest ranking representative appointed by a country to represent it in another country. The ambassador represents both a friendly country and a friendly potentate. Our God is friendly. You don't have to do anything to reconcile God. He has done it for you. Christ has died for you and for me. What can we add to what Christ has already done?

You cannot do anything to soften God's heart. His heart is already soft toward us because Jesus has already paid the penalty for our sin. Now we can say that ". . . If God be for us, who can be against us?" ([Rom. 8:31](#)). God is on our side, friend. The decree has come out, ". . . Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved . . ." ([Acts 16:31](#)). If you put your trust in Christ, you will be saved. That is the provision that King Ahasuerus made for the Jews. All they have to do is believe the new decree and act upon it. It will rescue them from certain death.

God has a way to save sinners. You are not good enough to go to heaven, and you never will be. God has to work you over. You and I have to come to Him and accept the salvation that provides for us a robe of righteousness that is perfect. Christ gives us His righteousness! You cannot improve on that! God could not take us to heaven as we are; we have to be born again. This is what our Lord said to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, ". . . ye must be born again" ([John 3:7](#)). In [1Peter 1:23](#), God puts it this way, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." It is because folk hear and believe the Word of God that they are born again and their lives are being changed.

I don't talk to people about "committing their lives to God" as if they had something to commit. Do you think He wants your old life? My friend, He wants to give you a new life. He wants to regenerate you. He wants to save you.

The Jews in Esther's day had to recognize that a decree had been made to destroy them. Also they had to believe that the king was on their side and had issued another decree to save them. We too must believe that the King of kings is on our side. I am an ambassador for Christ, and, therefore, on behalf of God I must say to you, ". . . be ye reconciled to God" ([2Cor. 5:20](#)). He is reconciled to you.

So the second decree from the king went out.

The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.

So the posts that rode upon mules and camels went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment. And the decree was given at Shushan the palace [[Esth. 8:13-14](#)].

There was a need for haste, and there is a need for haste today. I am not trying to frighten you, but this may be the last time you will have an opportunity to accept Christ as Savior. Now is the accepted time to believe Christ. The only time God wants you to be in a hurry, friend, is to accept His Son.

And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad [[Esth. 8:15](#)].

The royal apparel Mordecai is now wearing is certainly different from the sackcloth and ashes he wore only a short time before. His appearance in the city undoubtedly reinforced

the joy produced by the king's new decree. Notice the contrast between the two decrees; Haman's decree produced sorrow, and the king's decree produced joy.

Salvation can bring real joy into your life. You can go to a nightclub and spend one hundred dollars, and I will grant you that you can have a good time. If you are an unsaved person, you will have a good time because you can watch the show, get drunk, and eat like a glutton. Yes, you'll have a good time that night, but you won't in the morning. You will feel bad, and in it all you will never know what real joy is. Only when you come to Christ will you experience real joy.

The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour [[Esth. 8:16](#)].

Light is what God offers you. Jesus is the Light of the world. He also is the gladness, and joy, and honor of the world. The thing that gives dignity to sinners is to receive the Savior, who is God manifest in the flesh, who died for them. That will lift sinners out of the muck and mire. It will enable a sinner to walk through this world with his head held high, rejoicing. My, how we need to rejoice! Are you joyful today, Christian friend, with that gladness that comes from deep down in your heart? If you are not filled with joy, come to Christ and He will give you something to be glad about.

And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment, and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them [[Esth. 8:17](#)].

For fear of the Jews many of the people became Jews, that is, they accepted their religion. The nation Israel was a better witness to the world than we give it credit for.

Chapter 9

THEME: Institution of the Feast of Purim

The day of the Jews' execution is at hand.

Now in the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them;)

The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people [[Esth. 9:1-2](#)].

The Jews prepare themselves for the attack. The king's new decree is protecting them, so they get everything ready to defend themselves.

It is interesting to note that Herodotus, the Greek historian, records that Ahasuerus (Xerxes) returned home after his defeat in the Greek campaign, about 480 B.C., and that his wife, Amestris, was a cold and vindictive queen. That would be Esther, of course; and to an outsider it is understandable that she would appear vindictive and cold. After all, she stepped in and put an end to Haman's evil activities, and she was also able to save her people from their enemies at that particular time.

There are people who feel that it was brutal and cruel for a court of law to sentence many of Hitler's henchmen to prison, but those henchmen were rascals of the first order. Their treatment of the Jews in concentration camps was absolutely inhuman. To many people on the outside it did not look as though Hitler's men should be treated with such harshness, but those who knew the inside story knew that they got justice.

And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews; because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them.

For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater [[Esth. 9:3-4](#)].

Now Mordecai, one of their own, is by the side of the king. Haman, who would have put the Jews to death, is gone. The very throne that had once condemned the Jews now protects them.

The very throne of God protects us today. The apostle Paul says, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" ([Rom. 8:33-34](#)). Notice how He justifies: (1) Christ died; (2) He is risen again; (3) He is even at the right hand of God; and (4) He also makes intercession for us. These are the reasons no one can condemn a believer. How wonderful this is! Today there is a Man in the glory -- He knows exactly how you feel, and He knows exactly how I feel. And in that position He is interceding for us. Things have changed for us sinners. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" ([Heb. 4:14-16](#)).

I have a Savior who is despised by the world. A lot of dirty, blasphemous things are being said about Him. But, my friends, He is the Man in glory. He is the King of kings. He is the Lord of lords. He is the Lily of the Valley. He is the One altogether lovely. He is the Chief among ten thousand. And some day He is coming again. We ought to get in practice bending our knees to Him, adoring and praising Him. That is very important. He should become sweeter to us with each passing day. In fact, there is a song entitled "Sweeter As The Years Go By." That is the way it should be for each one of us. Do you rejoice more as a Christian today than you did one year ago? Or ten years ago? I thank God that I am a happier Christian today than I was ten years ago.

Now suppose that some Israelite living during the time of Queen Esther had said, "Well, I don't believe the new decree that has come from the king. I don't think the king is that good. I am going to protect myself the best way I can. I am going to make a little Maginot Line and hide in back of it. I will make a fortress and defend myself." But, my friend, it was death for the Jew who did not believe the king's decree.

Notice that the Jews had to have faith in the king's message. Like them, we must have faith in God's message, which is the gospel. The gospel means "good news." [1Corinthians 15:3-4](#) gives us God's message in a nutshell: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." God has sent out a decree to a lost world. Men and women are saved by faith and not by the works of the law. [John 1:12](#) says of the Lord Jesus, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on this name." The main thrust of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost was: through Christ is the remission of sins (see [Acts 2](#)).

The gospel is what saves men today. The gospel is what Someone has done for us. It is not a request on God's part for you and me to do something. On the contrary, the gospel is what He has done for us. If we do not place our trust and faith in Christ, there is no hope for us at all. Now, you may break some bad habits, you may forsake evil, you may go to church, you may be baptized, and you may take part in the Lord's Supper; and you may still be miserable. The only way to have real peace is to take God at His Word and believe His message. When you believe it, there is salvation.

The Jews who did not believe the king's decree had no hope at all. But the Jews who accepted the king's decree were joyful and glad, we are told. Why? Their faith in the king's decree brought deliverance.

And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that were in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, both nigh and far [[Esth. 9:20](#)].

Many people have asked the question, "Who wrote the Book of Esther?" I believe this passage gives us at least a suggestion that Mordecai was the author.

Wherefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur. Therefore for all the words of this letter, and of that which they had seen concerning this matter, and which had come unto them,

The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their appointed time every year [[Esth. 9:26-27](#)].

In our day the Feast of Purim is commemorated by the orthodox Jews first in their synagogues. It is a celebration of gladness, and it is concluded by the reading of the Book of Esther. As they read it, they spit as the name of Haman is mentioned. I understand that they can use one or two expressions: "Let his name be blotted out," or "Let him be accursed." Then the following day they come together for a joyful service because it is a feast that celebrates the fact that God has delivered them (and they include subsequent

deliverances such as that from the German atrocities) according to the promise that He made to Abraham. God had said, ". . . I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee . . ." ([Gen. 12:3](#)).

And that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed [[Esth. 9:28](#)].

Chapter 10

The Book of Esther concludes with this interesting sidelight in [Esther 10](#):

And the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea.

And all the acts of his power and of his might, and the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia?

For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed [[Esth. 10:1-3](#)].

You and I have a Savior who is going to bring real peace to their world someday.

It is interesting to note that there are three prayers the Jews pray at the time of the Feast of Purim. In the first prayer they thank Jehovah that they are counted worthy. In the second prayer they thank Him for preserving their ancestors. In the third prayer they thank Him that they have lived to enjoy another festival.

We as Christians see in the Passover Feast a spiritual meaning -- ". . . Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" ([1Cor. 5:7](#)). He is the salvation of God for us. In the Feast of Purim we see the keeping power of God. His providence, His sovereignty. As the writer of the Proverbs puts it, "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD" ([Prov. 16:33](#)). He will keep His nation Israel; He will keep His church; and He will keep the individuals who are His. He is able to save to the uttermost those who come unto God through Him.

It is a sad commentary on the present generation that most Christians know only a distant, providential oversight. They do not learn to walk with God in close fellowship, obeying God's Word.

"He knows and loves and cares,
Nothing this truth can dim:
He gives the very best to those
Who leave the choice to Him."

My friend, He wants to lead you by His eye. We need to move closer to Him today. Most believers know only of the distant providence of God which leads from way out yonder those who won't be led.

How many Christians today are walking in their own will! Things are going nicely. The sun is shining in the sky and the stones are removed from their pathway. They think they can work everything out by themselves; so they don't look to God. Then one day the winds begin to howl, the waves begin to roll, the way seems dark, and all of a sudden they cry out to Him, "Lord save me; I am perishing! Show me the way." Then if they get through that crisis, they say, "The Lord led me." My friend, only by God's providence did He lead you. You were actually not in the will of God.

So much is said today about the dedication of life and heart. I get so weary of hearing, "Come and dedicate your life to God." My friend, I am not asking you to do that. You can get down on your knees right now and dedicate your heart and life, and tomorrow you can be entirely out of God's will. At that point you revert to being moved again by the providence of God. Oh, He wants to lead you today -- He wants to guide you directly. I don't care who you are, or where you are going, He will overrule you. You may be a Hitler, or a Stalin, or even a Judas Iscariot. God overruled Judas, and He will overrule you, friend. But you can know the luxury and joy of coming to Him -- not just in one act -- but moment by moment, day by day, seeking God's will for your life. You can begin to walk out -- from wherever you are now -- in the will of God. What joy there is in walking in His will!

However, if you slip out from under God's direct dealings, you have not slipped out from under His providential dealings. God ever stands in the shadows, keeping watch over His own.

Bibliography

(Recommended for Further Study)

Darby, J. N. Synopsis of the Books of the Bible. Addison, Illinois: Bible Truth Publishers, n.d.

Gaebelein, Arno C. The Annotated Bible. 1917. Reprint. Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1970.

Gray, James M. Synthetic Bible Studies. Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1906.

Ironside, H. A. Notes on the Book of Esther. Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1921.

Jensen, Irving L. Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther: A Self-Study Guide. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1970.

McGee, J. Vernon. Esther, the Romance of Providence. Pasadena, California: Thru the Bible Books, 1951.

Sauer, Erich. The Dawn of World Redemption. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951. (An excellent temple survey.)

Scroggie, W. Graham. The Unfolding Drama of Redemption. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970. (An excellent survey and outline of the Old Testament.)

Unger, Merrill F. Unger's Bible Handbook. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1966. (A concise commentary on the entire Bible.)

Unger, Merrill F. Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament. Vol. 1. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1981. (A fine summary of each paragraph. Highly recommended.)

Whitcomb, John C. Esther: Triumph of God's Sovereignty. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1979. (An excellent treatment.)